

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BUDGET
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR
AND PENSIONS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

December 15, 2006

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20393

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

I write to express my concern regarding the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) failure to release its grant guidance for the FY07 homeland security grant program on a timely basis. As you know, the FY07 Homeland Security Appropriations legislation directed DHS to release grant application kits for the state homeland security program (SHSP), urban area security initiative (UASI), and law enforcement terrorism prevention program (LETPP) no later than 45 days after enactment. That date was November 17, 2006.

Unfortunately, only one day before state emergency management agencies were expecting the release of the grant guidance, DHS informed them that it would miss its congressionally-mandated deadline and would not be releasing the grant guidance. As a result, emergency management agencies around the country, including the Washington State Emergency Management Division (EMD), were forced to postpone long-planned preparation sessions until a date uncertain. This is especially troubling given the numerous problems with the previous year's grant application process and repeated reassurances from DHS that this year's process would be much more efficient.

The Department's unexplained delay has two consequences that place an unnecessary and unreasonable burden on state and local agencies. First, the delay of the SHSP, UASI and LETPP application timelines will most likely make them coincide with the applications for a number of other DHS-administered grants. As you know, each of these applications has different selection criteria and requires a different group of stakeholders at the state and local level to complete an application. Second, many states expect DHS to release its guidelines the last two weeks of the year – a time when most personnel are on holiday leave. The Washington State EMD documented 6,000 hours of state and local personnel time to complete the FY06 grant applications. These same personnel are already required to respond to emergency situations in their own communities, such as the extensive flooding and wind storms in the Pacific Northwest, and cannot sustain an unreasonable schedule for completing multiple applications. Unfortunately, DHS has not released a date on which the states can expect DHS to release its guidance, nor has it provided any further information to assist state agencies with their planning.

I strongly encourage you to work with the states to accommodate their needs that have arisen from DHS' delay in releasing its guidelines. Most importantly, if DHS has not done so already by the time it receives this letter, it should inform the states immediately of a *firm* date on which it will release its guidance and the application due date, so states can begin their internal preparations. DHS should also not begin any 90-day timeline until it has released *all* of the information the states need in order to complete their applications.

Thank you for your service to our country and dedication to securing our cities and communities. I look forward to your response and our continued work together in this area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patty Murray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Patty" and last name "Murray" clearly distinguishable.

Patty Murray
United States Senator